

Message Text

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70

ACTION EA-14

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INR-11 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03

SS-20 USIA-15 SAJ-01 SAM-01 NIC-01 OMB-01 NSCE-00

DRC-01 /120 W

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R 030220Z AUG 74

FM USLO PEKING

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2184

INFO AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

C O N F I D E N T I A L PEKING 1307

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR PINT CH UR

SUBJECT: SOVIET REPORT ON CCP CENTRAL COMMITTEE PLENARY
SESSION

REF: A. PEKING 1300 B. MOSCOW 11723

1. SOVIET POLCOUNS FEDOTOV TOLD US AUGUST 1 THAT SOMETHING APPROACHING CCP CENTRAL COMMITTEE PLENARY SESSION TOOK PLACE IN PEKING ON MAY 8 AT WHICH QUESTION OF CHOU EN-LAI'S HEALTH WAS DISCUSSED. (FEDOTOV DESCRIBED THIS MEETING AS BEING ON A SMALLER SCALE THAN A FULL PLENUM, BUT NOT AS SMALL AS A MEETING OF THE POLITBURO.) MAO TSE-TUNG REPORTEDLY ATTENDED AND PERSONALLY ADDRESSED THE MEETING ON SUBJECT OF CHOU'S HEALTH, SAYING THAT CHOU EN-LAI'S PHYSICAL CONDITION REQUIRED CONSIDERABLE RESTRICTION OF HIS POLITICAL ACTIVITIES.

2. ACCORDING TO FEDOTOV, MAO'S STATEMENT COULD BE TAKEN IN TWO WAYS:

A) PRESUPPOSING CHOU WAS NOT ALL THAT SICK, MAO'S REAL
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PURPOSE WAS SIMPLY TO LIMIT CHOU EN-LAI'S POLITICAL

ROLE USING CHOU'S PHYSICAL CONDITION AS AN EXCUSE; OR

B) CHOU REALLY WAS SICK AND MAO WAS UNDERSCORING THE NEED FOR CHOU TO REST. FEDOTOV INDICATED THAT SOVIETS HAD BEEN FAVORING THE FORMER OF THE TWO THEORIES, BUT HE ADMITTED THAT THIS INTERPRETATION CONFLICTED WITH EVIDENCE THAT CHOU REALLY HAD BEEN ILL AND ALSO WITH THE WARM APPLAUSE CHOU EN-LAI RECEIVED WHEN HE REAPPEARED IN PUBLIC JULY 31 AT THE ARMY DAY RECEPTION (REFTEL A - RPTD MOSCOW).

3. WE HAVE NOTICED FROM MOSCOW'S REPORTING THAT PERSONAGES SUCH AS KAPITSA HAVE TAKEN LINE THAT PRESENT POLITICAL SITUATION IN CHINA CHARACTERIZED BY STRUGGLE BETWEEN "LEFTIST" ELEMENTS HEADED BY CHIANG CH'ING AND MORE MODERATE FORCES HEADED BY CHOU EN-LAI, WITH MAO TSE-TUNG ALIGNING HIMSELF WITH THE LEFTISTS AGAINST CHOU AND CHOU EVEN ON THE WAY OUT (REFTEL B). THESIS (A) PUT FORWARD BY FEDOTOV WOULD SQUARE WITH THIS ANALYSIS. HOWEVER, WE HAVE NO WAY OF CONFIRMING WHETHER MEETING ALONG LINES DESCRIBED BY FEDOTOV ACTUALLY TOOK PLACE, AND IN THIS PARTICULAR SITUATION WE FIND IT HARD TO BELIEVE THAT SOVIETS POSSESS RELIABLE INSIDE INFORMATION.

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